

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
REGISTRATION

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name: Dewey Cottage

other name/site number: Admiral Dewey Inn

2. Location

street & number: 668 Matunuck Beach Road

not for publication: N/A

city/town: South Kingstown vicinity: N/A

state: RI county: Washington code: 009 zip code: 02879

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing Noncontributing

<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

____ See continuation sheet.



Signature of certifying official

24 March 1992

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

____ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

_____ See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the
National Register

_____ See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the
National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain): _____

~~Entered in the
National Register~~



5/7/92


Signature of Keeper

Date
of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: DOMESTIC

Sub: hotel

Current: DOMESTIC

Sub: hotel

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

LATE VICTORIAN

Other Description: _____

Materials: foundation CONCRETE roof ASPHALT
walls WOOD/shingle other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

X See continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: locally

Applicable National Register Criteria: A & C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURE
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period(s) of Significance: 1898

Significant Dates: 1898

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder:

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

X See continuation sheet.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office
 Other state agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other -- Specify Repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: less than one

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	<u>19</u>	<u>286840</u>	<u>4583680</u>	B	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

The nominated property is lot 161, in South Kingstown Assessor's Plat 92-2.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

The boundary encompasses the Dewey Cottage and its lot.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Vivienne Lasky, Consultant/Robert O. Jones, Sr. Hist. Pres. Spec.

Organization: R.I. Historical Preservation Commission Date: _____

Street & Number: 18 Savoy Street/150 Benefit St. Telephone: 401-272-6692

City or Town: Providence State: R.I. ZIP: 02906

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Description

The Dewey Cottage, now the Admiral Dewey Inn, is a large 3 1/2-story, wood-shingled, cross-gabled building, three bays by three bays with a L-shaped, two-story, multi-gabled wing with a small back porch at the rear. The front porch along the west elevation wraps around the southwest corner to cover the south elevation as well. The building dominates the corner of Matunuck Beach Road and Atlantic Avenue, and indeed, its entire neighborhood of turn-of-the-century beach cottages between the south end of Matunuck Beach Road and East Matunuck State Beach. Built in 1898 by George and Etta Champlin, it was named for Admiral George Dewey (1837-1917), the victor of the Battle of Manila Bay. Because of its height and many windows, the Dewey Cottage has many spectacular views of Block Island Sound from its south facade on Atlantic Avenue.

When purchased by the current owners in 1986, the Dewey Cottage had been empty for nearly fifteen years. Although there had been some deterioration, there had been relatively few interior changes made, and even fewer on the exterior. The building had settled badly, had virtually no plumbing or heating, and did not meet the fire code. The Cottage was temporarily moved while a full basement was dug and a new foundation was poured on the original site. The original fieldstone foundation stones were saved to be reused for garden walls. A new bulkhead was installed.

The exterior was reshingled following the original pattern: even butt shingles on the first and second stories, staggered butt shingles on the third, and fish-scale and sawtooth shingles on the dormers. Each story is delineated by flat-board belt-courses and flared courses of shingle. On the west facade the pent roof is broken by a shingled gable over the center door, echoing the third floor gables.

All 57 windows were removed, rebuilt, puttied and reglazed. The sash is two-over-two. A new window was added, on the rear (east) elevation. The windows were originally framed by shutters of which many were broken or missing. Those that could be saved have been repaired; the owners are seeking replacements of the same vintage. Some storm windows have been added.

A plain wooden exterior fire stair was added on the south elevation to comply with code requirements for a secondary exit. The simple wrap-around porch with bracketed posts and turned baluster railing was re-assembled from pieces found stored in the building.

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On the interior, the first-floor plan has been altered over time. Little is known of it, but oral accounts reveal that it had a guest parlor, dining room, large kitchen and rooms for the manager. The interior was and still is simply finished. The walls are sheetrock covered with reproduction wallpapers. The door and window enframements have molded architrave trim with corner blocks. The major architectural feature is the panelled closed string staircase with its heavy newel with acorn finials and applied roundels. The present configuration of the first-floor rooms is conjectural but appears to convey the feeling of the era. An oak mantel has been added to the new dining room. The utilitarian backstairs had fallen in and a new staircase has been installed.

The fifteen original guest rooms were all very small (10'7" x 10' 7", 8'7" x 13'8"), set along north/south double-loaded corridors on two floors. There were no bathrooms. To provide bathrooms, three original rooms were rebuilt as two bedrooms with two bathrooms without altering the basic configuration of the rooms, hall, or fenestration. Presently there are ten bedrooms, eight with bathrooms. The wood floors are new. All the rooms are wallpapered and furnished with period bedroom suites. The window and door enframements on the second floor echo those of the first; the third floor trim is a plainer version of the simple wide molded architrave trim. All the doors are five-panel and original.

The attic was unfinished; it is now heavily insulated. A full sprinkler system is also in place.

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Significance

The Dewey Cottage (1898), now the Admiral Dewey Inn, is significant to the architectural history of South Kingstown as a rare example of a vanishing vernacular building type: the seaside boarding-house hotel. Such structures reflect the evolution of the Rhode Island shore as a place of resort and recreation in the 19th and 20th centuries, an important part of the state's developmental history. This once-common building type has been virtually eliminated from the scene, and very few examples remain.

Built as a large family-style beach boardinghouse, the Dewey Cottage offered, in its advertisements, "good rooms and table board, all modern improvements with stable, pleasant location, good surf bathing, terms reasonable. George I. Champlin, Proprietor." Carriages from the Cottage met the trains at Wakefield; in the area's heyday (1898-1925) as many as 500 visitors a day arrived at Matunuck Beach. Summer families usually came to stay for the season--July 1 to August 15th. The Dewey Cottage was one of six such hotels (the Atlantic House, Buena Vista Cottage, Matunuck Beach Hotel, the Ocean Star, and the Park House) at Matunuck Beach, and it is the only one that remains intact and in its original use. Some permanent summer houses were built by prominent New Yorkers and Rhode Island industrialists, but these were located further from the beach, on higher ground in the Matunuck Hills. Most of the "summer people" did not maintain permanent residences; thus, the popularity of the hotel and the many smaller rental cottages--with quaint romantic names like "Mikado Cottage," "Brown Babies," "Red Cottage," and "Restawhile."

The 1915 Directory of Summer Residents for the area reveals that visitors came from as far as Brooklyn and Peekskill, New York; Waltham, Massachusetts; and New Haven, Connecticut. The majority came from Rhode Island, especially Providence and the towns of the Blackstone Valley, and nearby Massachusetts, especially the Attleboroughs. Matunuck remained a simple seaside destination, not a fashionable resort like Narragansett Pier or Newport. A Providence Journal article (c.1895) reported that the life of Matunuck Beach's visitors was "a dull and stupid life when you compare with the Pier folks but it suits them and gives them rest and health."

Over the last fifty years, fires, hurricanes, highways, the automobiles, and strip development have altered much of the historical and architectural character of Matunuck Beach, but the Dewey Cottage has survived as an important landmark which chronicles a significant era of social history, the growing importance of resort development in Rhode Island.

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Integrity

The task of renovating the Dewey Cottage was not a true restoration, given the constraints of modern fire and building safety codes. However, the work has been carefully and sympathetically accomplished and respects the spirit of the Dewey Cottage. The changes to the floor plan of the first floor, for example, do affect the integrity of the building, but such buildings are unusually rare and, even when they do survive, rarely retain a high level of integrity. The Dewey Cottage is one of the best preserved representatives of its type.

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Major Bibliographical References

Historic and Architectural Resources of South Kingstown, Rhode Island: A Preliminary Report, Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission.

Providence Journal, South County edition, April 27, 1988, "Inn Restoration is a moving experience," by Arline A. Flemming.

South Kingstown Directory, 1910.

South Kingstown Directory of Summer Residents, 1915.

Tallman, Mariana, Pleasant Places in Rhode Island, 1893.